

Crombie-Mathews House  
135 Spring Street  
Rochester  
Monroe County  
New York

HABS No. NY-5653

HABS  
NY,  
28-ROCH  
27-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. NY-5653

## CROMBIE-MATHEWS HOUSE

NY,

28-ROCH, 27-

Location: 135 Spring Street, at the southeast corner of Spring Street and Goldsmith Place, formerly West Alley, Rochester, Monroe County, New York

Present Owner and Occupant: The Builder's Exchange of Rochester

Present Use: Office headquarters

Statement of Significance: This late Greek Revival house characterizes not only the variety of this style found in western New York, but also the residential and architectural quality of its neighborhood which has been destroyed by the construction of an expressway.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History

1. Date of erection: c. 1851.
2. Architect: Built from plans by Andrew Jackson Warner.
3. Original and subsequent owners: "... a lot eighty-three and one-half feet by one hundred and ten feet; in addition a fifteen foot wide alley to the rear; ... a subdivision of lot 206 in the 100 Acre Tract ..." Lot 33 of Great Lot 51 on the Silas Cornell map.

1851 Deed, February 22, 1851, Book 94, p. 161.  
From: James Chappell and Jane, his wife.  
To: John Crombie.  
For: \$1,875.00.

1859 Deed, July 20, 1859, Book 152, p. 313.  
From: John Crombie and Charlotte A. Crombie, his wife.  
To: Eliza Colvard.  
For: \$15,000.00.

1861 Deed, November 22, 1861, Book 166, p. 377.  
From: Eliza Colvard.  
To: Charlotte A. Crombie.  
For: \$15,000.00.

- 1863 Deed, April 2, 1863, Book 176, p. 160.  
From: Charlotte A. Crombie and John, her husband.  
To: Lydia H. Rowley, wife of William C. Rowley.  
For: \$12,000.00.
- 1865 Deed, March 2, 1865, Book 191, p. 180.  
From: Lydia H. Rowley by Kneeland J. Holmes,  
referee.  
To: Owen Gaffney.  
For: \$7,450.00.
- 1880 Deed, February 10, 1880, Book 327, p. 305.  
From: Owen Gaffney and Louisa B., his wife.  
To: Joseph Medbury.  
For: \$16,000.00 plus the assumption of an \$8,000.00  
mortgage dated April 5, 1867.
- 1883 Will, February 27, 1883, Book 363, p. 436.  
From: Joseph Medbury.  
To: Anne E. Medbury, his wife.
- 1885 Will, December 15, 1885, Book 403, p. 48.  
From: Anne H. Medbury.  
To: Ellen A. Wild, 1/3 of the estate; Anna E. Wild,  
2/3 of the estate.
- 1900 Deed, March 30, 1900, Book 624, p. 418.  
From: Ella P. Wild, sole surviving trustee under  
last will and testament of Ellen A. Wild,  
Hudson, New York.  
To: Elizabeth G. Mathews.  
For: \$8,000.00.  
" ... two undivided third parts of property in ques-  
tion ... " At this time the lot had increased in  
depth by approximately forty feet.
- 1922 Will, April 19, 1922, Book 1497, p. 380.  
From: Elizabeth G. Mathews.  
To: Elizabeth Mathews Daly, niece.
- 1929 Deed, December 4, 1929, Book 1514, p. 81.  
From: Elizabeth Mathews Daly.  
To: The Builder's Exchange of Rochester, New York.
4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Unknown.
5. Original plans: Unknown.
6. Alterations and additions: Interior modifications were  
made between 1929 and 1967. An exterior wood framed  
enclosed entrance was added to the west rear section. The  
structure was demolished in 1967 for a new expressway.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

John Crombie, builder of the house, was a wholesale grocer and vice-president of the Eagle Bank. The subsequent owners were professional and business people. During the ownership of Joseph Medbury, publisher of the Rochester Advertiser, and incorporator of the Rochester Savings Bank (1831), Myron Adams, Jr., Pastor of the Plymouth Congregational Church, lived in the house. His grandson, Samuel Hopkins Adams, lived there with him. His remembrances are recorded in his book, Grandfather Stories. Hannah Gould, wife of the locally politically prominent Samuel Gould, also lived in the house. Elizabeth Mathews, wife of a prominent lawyer, purchased the property in 1900.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Bibliography:

a. Primary and unpublished sources:

Deed books, Office of Monroe County Clerk.

b. Secondary and published sources:

City Directories, Rochester, New York.

McIntosh, W. H. History of Monroe County, New York.  
Philadelphia: Everts, Ensign and Everts, 1877.

Rochester Union Advertiser, April 2, 1863, p. 2;  
April 13, 1864, p. 2; April 4, 1876, p. 2; July  
6, 1876, p. 2; May 17, 1880, p. 2; January 9,  
1883, p. 4; April 10, 1893, p. 5; December 30,  
1895, p. 7.

2. Likely sources not yet investigated: None known.

Prepared by Kevin Patrick Harrington  
Society for the Preser-  
vation of Landmarks  
in Western New York  
December 9, 1966

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Greek Revival character of this structure is apparent not only in the regularity and balance of the facade and its details, but also in the few surviving interior details.
2. Condition of fabric: Prepared for demolition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Forty-five feet by seventy-eight feet; three bays by three bays, main section; two-and-one-half stories, main section; two story rear section; rectangular main block with L-shaped rear section.
2. Foundations: The elevated dressed sandstone foundations are painted brown-red. A wide drip cap tops the foundation, running above the basement windows.
3. Wall construction: The plain brick coursing with no headers is painted a mustard color.
4. Structural system, framing: The masonry load bearing walls support a wood roof system and floors.
5. Chimneys: Four stepped and capped brick chimneys are located one at each corner of the main block. One central chimney angled in the upper story is located in the cupola. One brick chimney with top banding is located in the rear section.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance to the north consists of a single sidelight to the left of the single leaf door and a large rectangular top light set in a molded doorway which is topped by a banded stone lintel.
  - b. Windows: All windows are double hung with six over one light sashes. All windows are framed with stone lintels and projecting sills. The two first story windows on the north facade are finished with a decorative wrought iron balcony. Lintels of the main block are banded. There is a three-part rectangular window in the second story, centered over the north entrance. All window frames are fitted with shutter pins. A three-part projecting bay

topped by an elliptical fanlight is located at the southeast corner of the main block. All window trim is painted a brown-red. Half light windows arranged according to the bay system are located immediately under the eaves.

7. Roof: The hipped roof is finished with an asphalt sealer over tin. The five foot wide overhanging eaves with plain soffit are finished at the wall surface with a running Moorish arch and drop motif. The square cupola, centered in the main section has wide bracketed eaves. Two windows per side are glazed in a triangular pattern.
8. Porches, stoops, bulkheads: The flat roofed north entrance porch has a molded overhang and molded frieze supported by paired fluted and based columns at the front and single columns at the rear. The bound and lipped capitals have a rolled acanthus leaf ring in high relief. A five step projecting stair with simple metal handrail provides access to this porch. A one story hipped roof porch fills in the L-shape of the rear section. Three Doric columns set on octagonal bases support a plain slightly arched frieze. A section of vertical slats with molded top rail remains as an indication of the railing. Two doors open from this porch.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan: A center entrance hall provides access to the four room plan of the main block.
2. Stairways: There are two stairways. The main staircase is probably not original.
3. Flooring: All wood floors are covered with linoleum tile.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: All walls and ceilings are plaster. Most ceilings have acoustical tile inserted in the central panel revealing the original running plaster acanthus leaf molding.
5. Doorways and doors: There are eight and nine foot three over three ~~panel~~wooded doors.
6. Special decorative features: Applied Doric paneled pilasters supporting an elaborately worked entablature and projecting cornice originally framed some double

doorways in the main block. These have been filled to contain only a modern single door. Each of the four first floor principal rooms had fireplaces, the details of which have been removed.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The house set to the sidewalk and a narrow street faces north. Originally the house was part of the Third Ward, a large and rather prosperous residential area.
2. Outbuildings: There is a later two story, hipped roof brick carriage house at the northwest corner of the property.

Prepared by Kevin Patrick Harrington  
Society For the Preserva-  
tion of Landmarks in  
Western New York  
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PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This recording project of twenty-six selections of historical and architecturally significant Rochester structures was undertaken in 1966, by the Society for the Preservation of Landmarks in Western New York, Inc., Mrs. Patrick Harrington, Executive Director, in cooperation with the Historic American Buildings Survey, James C. Massey, Chief. The project was under the general direction of John Poppeliers, Senior Historian. Architectural and historical descriptions were contributed by the Society for the Preservation of Landmarks in Western New York, Inc. General photographic documentation was undertaken by Hans Padelt, Senior Engineer, Graflex, on a contractual basis with the Historic American Buildings Survey. The final documentation and editing was done by Susan R. Slade in 1978, for transmittal to the Library of Congress and the impending publication of the Historic American Buildings Survey New York State catalogue.